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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 000267

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TAGS: PREL UNAMSIL UNSC SL

SUBJECT: NEW UNIOSIL ACTING ERSG OUTLINES PRIORITIES

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Amy LeMar for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The new Acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (A/ERSG), Michael v. der Schulenberg, met with Ambassador Perry on June 2 to outline his priorities for his assignment in Sierra Leone. Given that his tenure is expected to last three months at most, the A/ERSG plans to keep his focus limited to three critical areas: (A) the July 5 local elections; (B) the June 2-6 visit of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and; (C) determining the kind of follow-on UN mission Sierra Leone needs to replace UNIOSIL after September. The latter area is one of key concern, and will be part of longer-term strategic thinking that he hopes to engage in prior to his departure. His no-nonsense approach, coupled with the short-term nature of his assignment, indicates that he will bring a new perspective and vision to develop the most reasonable and effective follow-on mission to UNIOSIL. END SUMMARY.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

¶2. (C) During the meeting, A/ERSG reviewed his activities since his May 27 arrival in Freetown, noting immediate priorities as follows:

(A) Local Elections - The A/ERSG met with National Electoral Commission (NEC) officials and the UNDP Electoral Assistance Team. He plans to conduct an election risk-analysis, which was to begin June 3. Issues to be covered by the risk-analysis include funding, procurement, security, monitoring and observation, and NEC performance.

(B) Peacebuilding Commission - The PBC is currently in Freetown from June 2-6 to review the situation on the ground and engage directly with the national government and stakeholders regarding the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. The A/ERSG felt the visit was not well timed, since it occurs only within days of his arrival.

(C) Post-Election Period - As UNIOSIL continues to drawdown, the need to identify what the follow-on UN mission will look like is critical. The UN country team proposal, according to the A/ERSG, disquieted some at UN HQ, primarily because the plan includes too many objectives for the anticipated limited staffing.

THE "FIXER" A/ERSG PERCEIVES HIS ROLE

¶2. (C) The A/ERSG perceives himself to be a one-man "repair shop," with the unspoken subtext behind this phrase that the process of deciding how to proceed with the transformation of the UN presence in Sierra Leone must be infused with strong leadership and a pragmatic mindset. He stated that he will focus on ascertaining how the new, smaller mission can have meaning. He also stated his concerns that there are too many documents and strategies developed for Sierra Leone which

have little appearance of harmonization. Even within the UN family, he stated, everyone views the country and its development in a different way. In his view, greater communication and universal focus is required. The Ambassador wholeheartedly agreed with this statement, informing him of the lack of routine donor coordination and the need for greater collaboration at the sectoral, as well as macro, levels.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) The A/ERSG is a seasoned UN official and a self-proclaimed "bureaucrat" with more than 30 years of UN experience. Though he will be in Sierra Leone for only a few months, his assessment that there needs to be greater donor coordination, as well as targeted focus for the UN family, is accurate. His statements indicated that he will look for cooperation and collaboration with donors as he reviews the vision for the next iteration of the UN presence. Post anticipates regular, productive interaction with him for this purpose throughout his tenure. Since the departure of former ERSG Angelo in December 2007, UNIOSIL has lacked leadership with sufficient authority, with the Chief of Peace and Governance section serving in the Acting Head of Mission role. The clout of the A/ERSG, combined with his outsider's perspective, will hopefully help determine the most realistic and efficient follow-on mission structure for Sierra Leone.
END COMMENT.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

¶14. (U) A/ERSG Michael v. der Schulenberg has worked for the UN for over 30 years. His most recent long-term assignment, from 2005 to 2008, was Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq. His principal responsibility there was political affairs. Other posts held include Head of Mission in Afghanistan, UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator in Iran, as well as assignments in Somalia, Syria, and Haiti. This is his first posting in West Africa.
PERRY